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**Personnel**



**ORDER OF THE SWORD PROGRAMS**

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This publication implements Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-28, *Awards and Decoration Programs*. This instruction formally establishes Air Force and Major Air Command (MAJCOM) Order of the Sword Program. The term “MAJCOM” used throughout this instruction refers equally to Air Force Field Operating Agencies (FOA) and Direct Reporting Units (DRU). This instruction applies to all Air Force personnel including the Air National Guard (ANG) and Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC). Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using the AF IMT 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF IMT 847s from the field through the appropriate functional’s chain of command. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS) Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located at [https://afrims.amc.af.mil/rds\\_series.cfm](https://afrims.amc.af.mil/rds_series.cfm).

## **1. Introduction.**

1.1. Objective. The Order of the Sword was established by the Air Force enlisted force to recognize and honor military senior officers, colonel or above, and civilian equivalents, for conspicuous and significant contributions to the welfare and prestige of the Air Force enlisted force, mission effectiveness as well as the overall military establishment. This honor should be bestowed at a time the enlisted force deems appropriate, based upon the eligible nominees contributions to the enlisted force, and should not be considered a part of the retirement process. Every action of the Order of the Sword must be conducted in a way that ensures the dignity, respect and honor in which the enlisted force has placed upon this distinguished recognition. The participants and audience for Order of the Sword ceremonies should primarily be enlisted members. Exceptions to this policy will be on a case-by-case basis and approved by the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). Individuals recognized and formally inducted into a Major Command (MAJCOM) Order of the Sword are as a general rule, ineligible for award of another sword.

1.2. Historical background. The Order of the Sword is patterned after two orders of chivalry founded during the Middle Ages. In 1522, King Gustavus the First of Sweden enjoined the noblemen commissioned by him to appoint officers to serve him. Those appointed were the accountants, builders, craftsmen, teachers, scribes, and others responsible for conducting the ordinary daily affairs of the kingdom. The system worked so well it was incorporated into the Swedish Army as a way to establish and maintain a cohesive, disciplined, well-trained force for protection of lives and property in the kingdom. These NCOs would honor their leader and pledge their loyalty by ceremoniously presenting him with a sword. The sword, a symbol of truth, justice, and power rightfully used, served as a token for all to see and know that here was a “leader among leaders”. This ceremony became known as the “Royal Order of the Sword.” It was passed through the ages, coming to America about the time of the Revolutionary War. The practice of awarding a sword lay dormant for many years. The only known instance of its use was in the 1860s when General Robert E. Lee was presented a sword by his command. The “Royal Order of the Sword” ceremony was revised, updated, and adopted by the NCOs of the United States Air Force in 1967. The Order of the Sword is the highest honor and tribute the enlisted corps can bestow upon an individual.

1.3. Ceremonial Master Sword. The CMSAF serves as keeper of the Air Force Master Sword. The Master Sword, emblematic of the Order of the Sword, is displayed at Headquarters United States Air Force. Each MAJCOM maintains its own Master Sword displayed appropriately at the MAJCOM headquarters, with the MAJCOM Command Chief Master Sergeant (CCM) serving as keeper of the command’s Master Sword. The Air Force and MAJCOM Master Swords also represent a permanent record of Order of the Sword recipients. Each time a person is inducted into the Order of the Sword, appropriate recognition of the event should be displayed on or nearby the sword display. Normally an individual metal plate with the honoree’s grade, first name, middle initial, last name, title, and date of induction is inscribed and affixed to the appropriate Master Sword display in chronological order.

1.4. Master Order of the Sword Listing. The CMSAF maintains a master listing of all recipients of the Air Force Order of the Sword, as well as the MAJCOM Order of the Sword. MAJCOM CCMs maintain master listings of all recipients of the MAJCOM Order of the Sword.

## **2. Approved Swords.**

2.1. Air Force Sword. The Air Force Sword is reserved for those deserving senior leaders who serve outside the MAJCOM structure.

2.2. MAJCOM Sword. MAJCOM CCMs maintain the MAJCOM Swords and ensure, they are reserved for those deserving senior leaders who serve or have served within the awarding MAJCOM.

2.3. Retiring a Sword. All authorized swords are considered unit memorabilia in accordance (IAW) AFI 84-103, *U.S. Air Force Heritage Program*. Therefore, upon the inactivation of a MAJCOM the MAJCOM CCM ensures the command’s sword is transferred to USAFM/MUC using the guidance found in AFI 84-103, paragraph 6.2.4.2

2.4. Reactivating a Sword. When a MAJCOM is reactivated, or its lineage transferred to another organization, the MAJCOM CCM of the reactivated command or command receiving the lineage of the inactivated MAJCOM sends a request, including a fund cite, to USAFM/MUC for return of the MAJCOM sword.

### 3. Nomination and Selection Procedures.

3.1. Air Force Order of the Sword Executive Committee. The committee serves as executive agent and is responsible for the development of guidelines, nomination procedures, approval or disapproval of any nominations submitted, and protocol of the induction ceremony. This committee is chaired by the CMSAF. Committee members include the command chiefs from: ACC, AETC, AFDW, AFGSC, AFMC, AFOSI, AFRC, AFSOC, AFSPC, AMC, ANG, PACAF, USAFA and USAFE.

3.1.1. Nomination Procedures: Only an AF enlisted member (must be an NCO or group of NCOs) may nominate any eligible individual, meeting the criteria established in paragraph 1.1 for the Air Force Order of the Sword. The nomination package must consist of three documents: a cover letter, brief justification, and biography of nominee.

3.1.2. Cover Letter. The cover letter identifies the nominee and is addressed to the Office of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, through the nominator's organization or to the MAJCOM CCM, as appropriate. The person submitting the nomination, or the group representative when an organization sponsors a nomination, signs the letter.

3.1.3. Brief Justification. Submit justification in bullet format on AF Form 1206, *Nomination for Award*, and limited to two pages (front and back of the AF Form 1206). The justification should state specific facts as to why the nominee is considered worthy of the award and should concentrate on the nominee's contributions to the welfare, advancement, and leadership of the enlisted force.

3.1.4. Biographical Sketch. Include a copy of the nominee's biography.

3.1.5. Indorsement and Routing for Air Force Order of the Sword. The MAJCOM CCM who initially receives the nomination must concur or nonconcur by indorsing the cover letter and forwarding the nomination package to the CMSAF who serves as the single focal point for the Air Force Order of the Sword nomination and selection process. The CMSAF will send a copy of the nomination package to each committee member who will have 15 days to respond. In situations where the CMSAF is the nominating official, he/she will forward the nomination package directly to the Executive Committee. Executive Committee members indorse the cover letter by indicating whether they concur or nonconcur with the nomination, then return the package to the CMSAF.

3.1.6. Each committee member votes on behalf of the enlisted members he/she represents and may consult, as necessary, with selected enlisted members of his/her command. All such discussions must remain ***strictly confidential***.

3.1.7. All correspondence referencing voting must remain between the individual committee members and the CMSAF. Committee members vote on behalf of the enlisted members they represent and should in no way influence another committee member's vote. Votes are strictly between an individual committee member and the CMSAF.

3.1.8. Consensus. A two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Committee is required for approval. ***The nomination and selection process is strictly confidential and not discussed, except when a committee member needs additional information.*** Disapproved nominations can be resubmitted with additional justification following a period of two years after initial submission or when the nominee departs his/her current position, whichever is later.

3.1.9. Notification. Once all committee members respond to a nomination, the CMSAF notifies the nominating NCO/group of NCOs of the decision by letter. Following all approved nominations, the CMSAF makes the initial notification to the nominated individual of his/her selection to receive the Air Force Order of the Sword. MAJCOM CCMs have oversight of the initial notification process within their respective commands.

3.1.10. Planning. The CMSAF will maintain an Air Force Order of the Sword Continuity Folder containing samples of all documents and materials used in a prospective Order of the Sword ceremony. The CMSAF coordinates and publishes the date and location of the Air Force Order of the Sword Induction Ceremony. A minimum of 6 months time is normally required to plan and conduct the ceremony.

3.2. MAJCOM Sword. Each MAJCOM may supplement this AFI outlining specific command guidance. The command guidance should parallel this AFI with regard to guidelines and nomination procedures. The approval process for all MAJCOM nominations for the Order of the Sword rests with the MAJCOM CCM, with final approval by the Office of the CMSAF.

3.3. MAJCOM CCMs essentially carry out the same responsibilities for the Command Sword as the CMSAF does for the Air Force Sword. NAF and/or Wing CCMs assigned to the MAJCOM typically makeup the MAJCOM Order of the Sword Committee, with the MAJCOM CCM serving as chair. These guidelines should be spelled out within the MAJCOM supplement to this AFI.

#### **4. Invitations - Air Force and MAJCOM Swords.**

4.1. Inductee. The inductee's invitation is imprinted and encased in a rich woodgrain container lined with ultramarine blue velvet. The invitation is affixed to the velvet and centered on the right side of the container. The Air Force or MAJCOM crest, as appropriate, is superimposed on crossed swords and centered on the left side. The CMSAF (or MAJCOM CCM) arranges an appropriate time and place to formally present the honoree's invitation and request the honoree's presence at the induction ceremony. Honorees should have no prior knowledge of their induction nomination or approval.

4.2. Special Guests of the Inductee. The induction committee works with the inductee to invite a limited number of special guests (not to exceed 10); these individuals may be officers, enlisted, or civilians. The inductee's spouse is invited by the committee and does not count against the special guest list. Family members, other than the spouse, will count as special guests.

4.3. Protocol Invitees. All Air Force Order of the Sword Executive Committee members receive an invitation and participate in conducting the ceremony as described by the CMSAF. For a MAJCOM Sword, all MAJCOM Order of the Sword Committee members receive an invitation and participate in conducting the ceremony as described by the MAJCOM CCM. All former CMSAFs receive an invitation to the Air Force Order of the Sword Ceremony, and the current and former CMSAFs all receive an invitation to a MAJCOM Order of the Sword Ceremony.

4.4. Other Guests. The CMSAF determines the remaining guest list for an Air Force Sword, and the MAJCOM CCM does the same for a Command Sword. Other guests are limited to enlisted members of the Armed Forces--active, reserve component, or retired.

#### **5. Ceremony Preparation - Air Force and MAJCOM Swords.**

5.1. Ceremony Committee: The CMSAF will select a chairperson to conduct the affairs of the Air Force Order of the Sword Ceremony preparation. MAJCOM CCMs carry out the same responsibilities for a Command Sword. The chairperson will ensure the committee is adequately

staffed to address items such as the invitations, gifts, music, script, decorations, photography/videography, spotlight or special lighting, room set-up (arrangement of tables), tear-down, welcome/departure cordon, escorts for distinguished guests, programs, transportation for the honoree and spouse, billeting for out-of-town guests, and publicity. The chairperson will ensure the appropriate ceremony rehearsals are conducted, to include key personnel attendance at the final practice. Periodically, the chairperson will provide an in-progress brief to the CMSAF or to the MAJCOM CCMs for a Command Sword. Following the ceremony, the chairperson will conduct a "hot wash" to capture the lessons learned and ensure the lessons learned are placed in the CMSAF Order of the Sword Continuity book.

5.2. Publicity. When an Air Force Order of the Sword ceremony is scheduled, the CMSAF, through the ceremony committee, arranges appropriate media coverage through Air Force Public Affairs. The news release should include the facts of the presentation, the nature of the award, and biographical data of the recipient. The CMSAF also arranges for video documentation of the induction ceremony and sends completed copies to the honoree, each Executive Committee member, and the Air Force Office of History for permanent file. MAJCOM CCMs carry out the same responsibilities for a Command Sword. In addition, the MAJCOM CCM conducting a Command Sword Ceremony also provides two 8" X 10" color photos of the recipient, and two copies of the recipient's official biography, to the CMSAF for historical files.

5.3. Funds. It is recommended that organizations establish and maintain a private organizational account available for costs incident to the ceremony. Each MAJCOM CCM with an approved Command Sword should maintain a private organizational account for the same reasons. Costs include funds for invitations; place cards; programs and mementos for attendees; the framed personal sword, scroll, citation, and proclamation; the banquet dinner; and gifts presented to the inductee and spouse. Enlisted members of the Air Force, or MAJCOM in the case of a Command Sword, fund all expenses incident to the ceremony from their own resources. For an Air Force Sword, costs are usually equally distributed across the MAJCOMs, FOAs, and DRUs. For a Command Sword, a field unit with an approved honoree usually takes responsibility for the largest share of the total funds required.

5.4. Dress for the induction ceremony is appropriate mess dress or semiformal dress uniform for all military personnel--active, reserve component, or retired. Formal attire is appropriate for civilians.

#### 5.5. Ceremony Participants.

5.5.1. Chief Master Sergeant of the Mess (CMSAF - AF Sword; MAJCOM CCM - Command Sword)

5.5.2. First Sergeant (MAJCOM CCM for AF Sword; NAF/Wing CCM for Command Sword)

5.5.3. Duty Sergeant (MAJCOM CCM for AF Sword; NAF/Wing CCM for Command Sword)

5.5.4. Chaplain

5.5.5. Sergeant at Arms

5.5.6. Honor Guard Commander

5.5.7. Honor Guard Members

5.5.8. Guardian of the Sword

5.5.9. Keepers of the Master Sword

5.5.10. Keepers of the Scroll

5.5.11. Air Force or Command Band (as appropriate)

5.6. The following items are **mandatory** presentations during all Order of the Sword induction ceremonies:

5.6.1. Personal Sword. A symbolic sword mounted on red velvet (the traditional color representative of the enlisted force) under glass in a wooden shadow box.

5.6.2. Scroll. A scroll mounted on ultramarine blue velvet under glass in a wooden shadow box. The scroll is signed by enlisted members upon arriving for the Order of the Sword Induction Ceremony.

5.6.3. Proclamation. A proclamation mounted on ultramarine blue velvet under glass in a wooden shadow box. It reflects the titles and signatures of the Air Force or MAJCOM Order of the Sword Committee members, as appropriate.

5.6.4. Citation. The citation mounted on ultramarine blue velvet under glass in a wooden shadow box. It is signed by the Chief Master Sergeant of the Mess.

5.7. The following items are **optional** presentations during the induction ceremony: personal gift to honoree and spouse, wine glasses, and photo album.

**6. Information Collection, Records, and Forms:**

6.1. Information Collections. AF Form 1206 *Nomination for Award*.

6.2. Records. The program records created as a result of the processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with AFMAN 33-363 and disposed of in accordance with the AFRIMS RDS located at [https://afrims.amc.af.mil/rds\\_series.cfm](https://afrims.amc.af.mil/rds_series.cfm).

6.3. Adopted and Prescribed Forms.

6.3.1. Adopted Forms.

AF IMT 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

AF Form 1206, *Nomination for Award*

6.3.2. Prescribed Forms. No prescribed forms for this publication.

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**Attachment 1****GLOSARRY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION*****References***

AFI 84-103, *U.S. Air Force Heritage Program*, 27 October 2004

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 March 2008

AFRIMS RDS, [https://afrims.amc.af.mil/rds\\_series.cfm](https://afrims.amc.af.mil/rds_series.cfm)

***Abbreviations and Acronyms***

**ACC**—Air Combat Command

**AETC**—Air Education Training Command

**AFDW**—Air Force District of Washington

**AFGSC**—Global Strike Command

**AFI**—Air Force Instruction

**AFMC**—Air Force Material Command

**AFOSI**—Air Force Office of Special Investigation

**AFPD**—Air Force Policy Directive

**AFRC**—Air Force Reserve Command

**AFSOC**—Air Force Special Operations Command

**AFSPC**—Air Force Space Command

**AMC**—Air Mobility Command

**ANG**—Air National Guard

**CCM**—Command Chief Master Sergeant

**CMSAF**—Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

**DRU**—Direct Reporting Unit

**FOA**—Field Operating Agency

**IMT**—Information Management Tool

**MAJCOM**—Major Command

**NAF**—Numbered Air Force

**NCO**—Noncommissioned Officer

**PACAF**—Pacific Air Force

**USAF**—United States Air Force Academy

**USAFE**—United States Air Forces Europe